



Arizona Department of Public Safety

- For Immediate Release -

Thursday, February 14, 2008

Seven human smugglers arrested at local “drop house” by DPS, the Phoenix Police Department and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

At 11:25 a.m. today, officers with the Phoenix Police Department interviewed a suspected undocumented alien (UDA) who claimed to have escaped after being held as a prisoner by human smugglers at a nearby drop house. Personnel from the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) assigned to the Illegal Immigration Prevention and Apprehension Co-op Team, better known as IIMPACT, responded to help further investigate the situation. IIMPACT includes Phoenix Police, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Arizona Financial Crimes Task Force.

After gathering more information, officers went to a house at 5728 W. Fairmount in Phoenix. At that location a total of 28 suspected UDAs consisting of 5 females and 23 males were being held against their will. The man who had originally escaped along with several others pointed out seven so called “coyotes” or human smugglers that were still in the house.

Officers were told the 28 people had been in the house for three days. All were bound. Several had been beaten as the “coyotes” made extortion calls to their families in Mexico. One smuggler had held a knife to the ribs of one of the victims.

ICE agents took custody of the UDAs. Phoenix Police and DPS Officers arrested the 7 human smugglers. They face charges of kidnapping, aggravated assault and extortion.

“Today’s operation demonstrates the success of that continuing partnership of law enforcement working together for a common goal to identify and disrupt criminal organizations engaged in human smuggling and conducting investigations into the financial deals that support the illegal human smuggling trade,” said Roger Vanderpool, Director of the Arizona Department of Public Safety.

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